

THE NARRATIVE MUSE

Compiled by
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and
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PART I

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PREFACE

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THE ABBOT OF INISFÄLEN

A Killarney Legend

THE Abbot of Inisfälen awoke ere dawn of day;
Under the dewy green leaves went he forth to pray
The lake around his island lay smooth and dark and deep
And wrapt in a misty stillness the mountains were all
asleep.
Low kneeled the Abbot Cormac when the dawn was din
and gray;
The prayers of his holy office he faithfully 'gan say.
Low kneeled the Abbot Cormac while the dawn wa
waxing red;
And for his sins' forgiveness a solemn prayer he said:
Low kneeled the holy Abbot while the dawn was waxing
clear;
And he prayed with loving-kindness for his convent
brethren dear.
Low kneeled that blessed Abbot while the dawn wa
waxing bright;
He prayed a great prayer for Ireland, he prayed with
all his might.
Low kneeled that good old Father while the sun began
to dart;
He prayed a prayer for all men, he prayed it from his
heart.
His blissful soul was in Heaven, though a breathing man
was he;
He was out of time's dominion, so far as the living
may be.

W. ALLINGHAM

The Abbot of Inisfälen arose upon his feet;
He heard a small bird singing, and O but it sang sweet!
It sung upon a holly-bush, this little snow-white bird;
A song so full of gladness he never before had heard.
It sung upon a hazel, it sung upon a thorn;
He had never heard such music since the hour that he
was born.

It sung upon a sycamore, it sung upon a briar;
To follow the song and hearken this Abbot could never
tire.

Till at last he well bethought him; he might no longer
stay;

So he blessed the little white singing-bird, and gladly
went his way.

But, when he came to his Abbey, he found a wondrous
change;

He saw no friendly faces there, for every face was strange.
The strange men spoke unto him; and he heard from all
and each

The foreign tongue of the Sassenach, not wholesome
Irish speech.

Then the oldest monk came forward, in Irish tongue
spake he:

‘Thou wearest the holy Augustine’s dress, and who hath
given it to thee?’

‘I wear the holy Augustine’s dress, and Cormac is my
name,

The Abbot of this good Abbey by the grace of God I am.
I went forth to pray, at the dawn of day; and when my
prayers were said,

THE ABBOT OF INISFÄLEN

I hearkened awhile to a little bird, that sung above my head.'

The monks to him made answer, 'Two hundred years have gone o'er,

Since our Abbot Cormac went through the gate, and never was heard of more.

Matthias now is our Abbot, and twenty have passed away.

The stranger is lord of Ireland; we live in an evil day.'

'Days will come and go,' he said, 'and the world will pass away,

In Heaven a day is a thousand years, a thousand years are a day.

'Now give me absolution; for my time is come,' said he.

And they gave him absolution, as speedily as might be.

Then, close outside the window, the sweetest song they heard

That ever yet since the world begun was uttered by any bird.

The monks looked out and saw the bird, its feathers all white and clean;

And there in a moment, beside it, another white bird was seen.

Those two they sang together, waved their white wings, and fled;

Flew aloft, and vanished; but the good old man was dead.

They buried his blessed body where lake and green-sward meet;

A carven cross above his head, a holly-bush at his feet;

W. ALLINGHAM

Where spreads the beautiful water to gay or cloudy
skies,
And the purple peaks of Killarney from ancient woods
arise.

W. ALLINGHAM

(1824-89)

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

COME, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shorewards blow;
Now the salt tides seawards flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away.
This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.
Call once yet.
In a voice that she will know:
'Margaret! Margaret!'
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear:
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again.
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way.
'Mother dear, we cannot stay.'
The wild white horses foam and fret.
Margaret! Margaret!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Come, dear children, come away down.
Call no more.
One last look at the white-walled town,
And the little grey church on the windy shore:
Then come down.
She will not come though you call all day.
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
Where the sea-beasts ranged all round
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;
Where the great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of the far-off bell.
She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea.
She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee.'
I said: 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves.
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves.'
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they say.
Come,' I said, and we rose through the surf in the
bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little grey church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones, worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded
panes.

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone.
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'
But, ah, she gave me never a look,



THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

MATTHEW ARNOLD

For her eyes were sealed to the holy book.
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down,
Down to the depths of the sea.
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark, what she sings: 'O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy;
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun.'
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the shuttle falls from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh,
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children.
Come, children, come down.

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing, 'Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she.
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow;
When clear falls the moonlight;
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom:
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down,

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Singing, 'There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'

MATTHEW ARNO

(1822-86)

THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP

THE fire-flash shines from Reculver cliff,
And the answering light burns blue in the skiff,
And there they stand,
That smuggling band,
Some in the water and some on the sand,
Ready those contraband goods to land;
The night is dark, they are silent and still;
At the head of the party is Smuggler Bill.

'Now lower away! come, lower away!
We must be far ere the dawn of the day.
If Exciseman Gill should get scent of the prey,
And should come, and should catch us here, what would
he say?

Come, lower away, lads—once on the hill,
We'll laugh, ho! ho! at Exciseman Gill.'

The cargo's lowered from the dark skiff's side,
And the tow-line drags the tubs through the tide—
No trick nor flam,
But your real Schiedam.

'Now mount, my merry men, mount and ride!
Three on the crupper and one before,

THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP

And the led-horse laden with five tubs more;
But the rich point-lace,
In the oil-skin case
Of proof to guard its contents from ill,
The 'prime of the swag,' is with Smuggler Bill.

Merrily now in a goodly row,
Away and away those smugglers go,
And they laugh at Exciseman Gill, ho! ho!
When out from the turn
Of the road to Herne,
Comes Gill, wide awake to the whole concern—
Exciseman Gill, in all his pride,
With his Custom-house officers all at his side.
They were called Custom-house officers then;
There were no such things as 'Preventive men.'

Sauve qui peut!

That lawless crew,
Away, and away, and away they flew:
Some dropping one tub, some dropping two;
Some gallop this way, and some gallop that,
Through Fordwich Level—o'er Sandwich Flat;
Some fly that way, and some fly this,
Like a covey of birds when the sportsmen miss;
These in their hurry
Make for Sturry,
With Custom-house officers close in their rear,
Down Rushbourne Lane, and so by Westbere,
None of them stopping,
But shooting and popping;

And many a Custom-house bullet goes slap
Through many a three-gallon tub like a tap,
 And the gin spirits out
 And squirts all about,
And many a heart grew sad that day
That so much good liquor was so thrown away.

Sauve qui peut!

 That lawless crew,
Away, and away, and away they flew.
Some seek Whitstable—some Grove Ferry,
Spurring and whipping like madmen—very—
For the life! for the life! they ride! they ride!
And the Custom-house officers all divide,
And they gallop on after them far and wide.
All, all, save one—Exciseman Gill:
He sticks to the skirts of Smuggler Bill.

Smuggler Bill is six feet high;
He has curling locks, and a roving eye;
He has a tongue and he has a smile
Trained the female heart to beguile,
And there is not a farmer's wife in the Isle,
 From St. Nicholas quite
 To the Foreland Light,
But that eye, and that tongue, and that smile will
 wheedle her
To have done with the grocer and make *him* her tea-
 dealer;
There is not a farmer there but he still
Buys gin and tobacco from Smuggler Bill.

THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP

Smuggler Bill rides gallant and gay
On his dapple-grey mare, away, and away,
And he pats her neck, and he seems to say,
‘Follow who will, ride after who may,
In sooth he had need
Fodder his steed,
In lieu of Lent-corn, with a quicksilver feed;
Nor oats, nor beans, nor the best of old hay,
Will make him a match for my own dapple-grey.
Ho! ho!—Ho! ho!’ says Smuggler Bill—
He draws out a flask and he sips his fill,
And he laughs ‘Ho! ho!’ at Exciseman Gill.

Down Chislett Lane, so free and so fleet
Rides Smuggler Bill, and away to Up-street;
Sarre Bridge is won—
Bill thinks it fun;
‘Ho! ho! the old tub-gauging son of a gun—
His wind will be thick, and his breeks be thin,
Ere a race like this he may hope to win.’

Away, away
Goes the fleet dapple-grey,
Fresh as the breeze, and free as the wind,
And Exciseman Gill lags far behind.
‘I would give my soul,’ quoth Exciseman Gill,
‘For a nag that would catch that Smuggler Bill.
No matter for blood, no matter for bone,
No matter for colour, bay, brown or roan,
So I had but one!’
A voice cried ‘Done!’

'Aye, dun,' said Exciseman Gill, and he spied
A Custom-house officer close by his side,
On a high-trotting horse with a dun-coloured hide.
'Devil take me,' again quoth Exciseman Gill,
'If I had but that horse, I'd have Smuggler Bill.'

From his using such shocking expressions it's plain
That Exciseman Gill was rather profane.

He was, it is true,
As bad as a Jew,
A sad old scoundrel as ever you knew,
And he rode in his stirrups sixteen stone two.
He'd just uttered the words which I've mentioned to you,
When his horse, coming slap on his knees with him, threw
Him head over heels, and away he flew,
And Exciseman Gill was bruised black and blue.

When he arose
His hands and his clothes
Were as filthy as could be—he'd pitched on his nose,
And rolled over and over again in the mud,
And his nose and his chin were all covered with blood;
Yet he screamed with passion, 'I'd rather grill
Than not come up with that Smuggler Bill.'
'Mount! Mount!' quoth the Custom-house officer, 'get
On the back of my dun, you'll bother him yet.
Your words are plain, though they're somewhat rough,
"Done and Done" between gentlemen's always enough.
I'll lend you a lift—there—you're up on him—so,
He's a rum one to look at—a devil to go!'

Exciseman Gill
Dashed up the hill,

THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP

And marked not, so eager was he in pursuit,
The queer Custom-house officer's queer-looking boot.

Smuggler Bill rides on amain.

He slacks not girth and he draws not rein,
Yet the dapple-grey mare bounds on in vain,
For nearer now—and he hears it plain—
Sounds the tramp of a horse—'Tis the Gauger again.'

Smuggler Bill

Dashes round by the mill

That stands near the road upon Monkton Hill.

'Now speed—now speed—

My dapple-grey steed:

Thou ever, my dapple, wert good at need.
O'er Monkton Mead, and through Minster Level,
We'll baffle him yet, be he gauger or devil.

For Manston Cave, away! away!

Now speed thee, now speed thee, my good dapple-grey;
It shall never be said that Smuggler Bill
Was run down like a hare by Exciseman Gill.'

Manston Cave was Bill's abode:

A mile to the north of the Ramsgate road

(Of late they say

It's been taken away—

That is, levelled, and filled up with chalk and clay,
By a gentleman there of the name of Day).

Thither he urges his good dapple-grey;

And the dapple-grey steed,

Still good at need,

Though her chest it pants, and her flanks they bleed,
Dashes along at the top of her speed;

R. H. BARHAM

But nearer and nearer Exciseman Gill
Cries 'Yield thee! now yield thee, thou Smuggler Bill!'

Smuggler Bill, he looks behind,
And he sees a dun horse come swift as the wind,
And his nostrils smoke and his eyes they blaze
Like a couple of lamps on a yellow post-chaise.

Every shoe he has got
Appears red-hot.

And sparks round his ears snap, crackle, and play,
And his tail cocks up in a very odd way;
Every hair in his mane seems a porcupine's quill,
And there on his back sits Exciseman Gill,
Crying 'Yield thee! now yield thee, thou Smuggler Bill!'

Smuggler Bill from his holster drew
A large horse-pistol, of which he had two,
Made by Nock;
He pulled back the cock
As far as he could to the back of the lock;
The trigger he touched, and the welkin rang
To the sound of the weapon, it made such a bang;
Smuggler Bill ne'er missed his aim;
The shot told true on the dun—but there came
From the hole where it entered—not blood—but flame.

He changed his plan,
And fired at the man;

But his second horse-pistol flashed in the pan,
And Exciseman Gill with a hearty good will
Made a grab at the collar of Smuggler Bill.

THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP

The dapple-grey mare made a desperate bound
When that queer dun horse on her flank she found,
Alack! and alas! on what dangerous ground!
It's enough to make one's flesh to creep
To stand on that fearful verge, and peep
Down the rugged sides so dreadfully steep,
Where the chalk-hole yawns full sixty feet deep,
O'er which that steed took that desperate leap.
It was so dark then under the trees
No horse in the world could tell chalk from cheese.
Down they went—o'er that terrible fall—
Horses, Exciseman, Smuggler, and all.

Below were found

Next day on the ground

By an elderly gentleman walking his round
(I wouldn't have seen such a sight for a pound),
All smashed and dashed, three mangled corpses,
Two of them human—the third was a horse's—
That good dapple-grey, and Exciseman Gill
Yet grasping the collar of Smuggler Bill.

But where was the dun? that terrible dun?
From that terrible night he was seen by none.
There are some people think, though I am not one,
That part of the story all nonsense and fun,

But the country-folks there

One and all declare,

When the 'Crown's 'Quest' came to sit on the pair,
They hear a loud horse-laugh up in the air.

If in one of the trips

Of the steam-boat 'Eclipse'

R. H. BARHAM

You should go down to Margate to look at the ships,
Or to take what the bathing-room people call 'dips,'
 You may hear old folks talk
 Of that quarry of chalk;
Or go over—it's rather too far for a walk,
But a three-shilling drive will give you a peep
At that fearful chalk-pit, so awfully deep,
Which is called to this moment "The Smuggler's Leap."
Nay more, I am told, on a moonshiny night,
If you're 'plucky,' and not over subject to fright,
And go and look over that chalk-pit white,
 You may see, if you will,
 The ghost of Old Gill
Grabbing the ghost of Smuggler Bill,
And the ghost of the dapple-grey lying between 'em.
I'm told so—I can't say I know one who's seen 'em.

R. H. BARHAM

(1788-1845)

ALHAMA

THE Moorish King rides up and down,
Through Granada's royal town;
From Elvira's gate to those
Of Bivarambla on he goes.

Woe is me, Alhama!

Letters to the monarch tell
How Alhama's city fell:
In the fire the scroll he threw,
And the messenger he slew.

Woe is me, Alhama!

He quits his mule, and mounts his horse,
And through the street directs his course;
Through the street of Zacatin
To the Alhambra spurring in.

Woe is me, Alhama!

When the Alhambra walls he gained,
On the moment he ordained
That the trumpet straight should sound
With the silver clarion round.

Woe is me, Alhama!

And when the hollow drums of war
Beat the loud alarm afar,
That the Moors of town and plain
Might answer to the martial strain.

Woe is me, Alhama!

LORD BYRON

Then the Moors, by this aware,
That bloody Mars recalled them there,
One by one, and two by two,
To a mighty squadron grew.

Woe is me, Alhama!

Out then spake an aged Moor
In these words the king before,
‘Wherefore call on us, O King?
What may mean this gathering?’

Woe is me, Alhama!

‘Friends! ye have, alas! to know
Of a most disastrous blow;
That the Christians, stern and bold,
Have obtained Alhama’s hold.’

Woe is me, Alhama!

Out then spake old Alfaqui,
With his beard so white to see,
‘Good King! thou art justly served,
Good King! this thou hast deserved.

Woe is me, Alhama!

‘By thee were slain, in evil hour,
The Abencerrage, Granada’s flower;
And strangers were received by thee
Of Cordova the Chivalry.

Woe is me, Alhama!

ALHAMA

‘And for this, O King! is sent
On thee a double chastisement:
Thee and thine, thy crown and realm,
One last wreck shall overwhelm.
Woe is me, Alhama!

‘He who holds no laws in awe,
He must perish by the law;
And Granada must be won,
And thyself with her undone.’
Woe is me, Alhama!

Fire flashed from out the old Moor’s eyes,
The Monarch’s wrath began to rise,
Because he answered, and because
He spake exceeding well of laws.
Woe is me, Alhama!

‘There is no law to say such things
As may disgust the ear of kings’—
Thus, snorting with his choler, said
The Moorish King, and doomed him dead.
Woe is me, Alhama!

Moor Alfaqui! Moor Alfaqui!
Though thy beard so hoary be,
The King hath sent to have thee seized,
For Alhama’s loss displeased.
Woe is me, Alhama!

LORD BYRON

And to fix thy head upon
High Alhambra's loftiest stone;
That this for thee should be the law,
And others tremble when they saw.
Woe is me, Alhama!

'Cavalier, and man of worth!
Let these words of mine go forth!
Let the Moorish Monarch know,
That to him I nothing owe.
Woe is me, Alhama!

'But on my soul Alhama weighs,
And on my inmost spirit preys;
And if the King his land hath lost,
Yet others may have lost the most.
Woe is me, Alhama!

'Sires have lost their children, wives
Their lords, and valiant men their lives.
One what best his love might claim
Hath lost, another wealth, or fame.
Woe is me, Alhama!

'I lost a damsel in that hour,
Of all the land the loveliest flower;
Doubloons a hundred I would pay,
And think her ransom cheap that day.'
Woe is me, Alhama!

ALHAMA

And as these things the old Moor said,
They severed from the trunk his head;
And to the Alhambra's wall with speed
'Twas carried, as the King decreed.

Woe is me, Alhama!

And men and infants therein weep
Their loss, so heavy and so deep;
Granada's ladies, all she rears
Within her walls, burst into tears.

Woe is me, Alhama!

And from the windows o'er the walls
The sable web of mourning falls;
The King weeps as a woman o'er
His loss, for it is much and sore.

Woe is me, Alhama!

LORD BYRON

(1788-1824)

COLUMBUS

How in God's name did Columbus get over
Is a pure wonder to me, I protest;
Cabot, and Raleigh too, that well-read rover,
Frobisher, Dampier, Drake, and the rest.
Bad enough all the same,
For them that after came,
But, in great Heaven's name,
How *he* should ever think
That on the other brink

A. H. CLOUGH

Of this wild waste terra firma should be,
Is a pure wonder, I must say, to me.

How a man ever should hope to get thither,
E'en if he knew that there was another side;
But to suppose he should come any whither,
Sailing straight on into chaos untried,
In spite of the motion
Across the whole ocean,
To stick to the notion
That in some nook or bend
Of a sea without end
He should find North and South America,
Was a pure madness, indeed I must say, to me.

What if wise men had, as far back as Ptolemy,
Judged that the earth like an orange was round,
None of them ever said, Come along, follow me,
Sail to the West, and the East will be found.
Many a day before
Ever they'd come ashore,
From the 'San Salvador',
Sadder and wiser men
They'd have turned back again;
And that *he* did not, but did cross the sea,
Is a pure wonder, I must say, to me.

A. H. CLOUGH

(1819-61)

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND

To Rathlin's Isle I chanced to sail
When summer breezes softly blew,
And there I heard so sweet a tale
That oft I wished it could be true.

They said, at eve, when rude winds sleep,
And hushed is every turbid swell,
A mermaid rises from the deep
And sweetly tunes her magic shell.

And while she plays, rock, dell, and cave,
In dying falls the sound retain,
As if some choral spirits gave
Their aid to swell her witching strain.

Then summoned by that dulcet note,
Uprising to the admiring view,
A fairy island seems to float
With tints of many a gorgeous hue.

And glittering fanes, and lofty towers,
All on this fairy isle are seen:
And waving trees, and shady bowers,
With more than mortal verdure green.

And as it moves, the western sky
Glowes with a thousand varying rays;
And the calm sea, tinged with each dye,
Seems like a golden flood of haze.

L. A. CONOLLY

They also say, if earth or stone
From verdant Erin's hallowed land
Were on this magic island thrown,
For ever fixed it then would stand.

But when for this some little boat
In silence ventures from the shore,
The mermaid sinks—hushed is the note—
The fairy isle is seen no more.

L. A. CONOLLY

(c. 1786-1833)

A BALLAD FOR A BOY

WHEN George the Third was reigning a hundred
years ago,
He ordered Captain Farmer to chase the foreign foe.
'You're not afraid of shot,' said he, 'you're not afraid of
wreck,
So cruise about the west of France in the frigate called
"Quebec".

'Quebec was once a Frenchman's town, but twenty years
ago
King George the Second sent a man called General
Wolfe, you know,
To clamber up a precipice and look into Quebec,
As you'd look down a hatchway when standing on the
deck.

A BALLAD FOR A BOY

'If Wolfe could beat the Frenchmen then, so you can
beat them now.

Before he got inside the town he died, I must allow.

But since the town was won for us it is a lucky name,

And you'll remember Wolfe's good work, and you shall
do the same.'

Then Farmer said, 'I'll try, sir,' and Farmer bowed so
low

That George could see his pigtail tied in a velvet bow.

George gave him his commission, and that it might be
safer,

Signed, 'King of Britain, King of France,' and sealed it
with a wafer.

Then proud was Captain Farmer in a frigate of his own,
And grander on his quarter-deck than George upon his
throne.

He'd two guns in his cabin, and on the spar-deck ten,
And twenty on the gun-deck, and more than ten-score
men.

And as a huntsman scours the brakes with sixteen brace
of dogs,

With two-and-thirty cannon the ship explored the fogs.
From Cape La Hogue to Ushant, from Rochefort to
Belleisle,

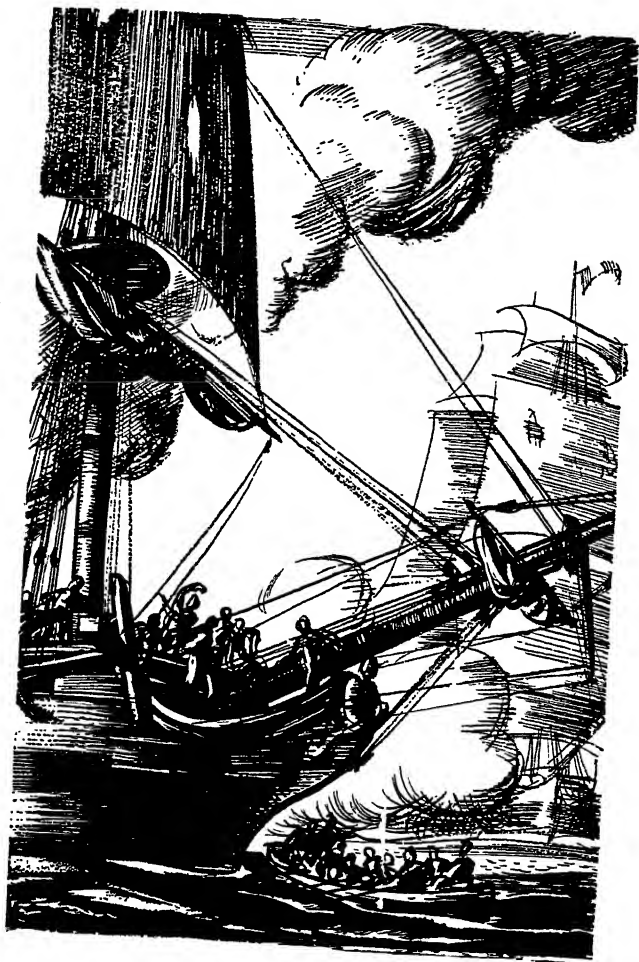
She hunted game till reef and mud were rubbing on her
keel.

The fogs are dried, the frigate's side is bright with melting tar,
The lad up in the foretop sees square white sails afar;
The east wind drives three square-sailed masts from out the Breton bay,
And 'Clear for action!' Farmer shouts, and reefers yell
'Hooray!'

The Frenchman's captain had a name I wish I could pronounce;
A Breton gentleman was he, and wholly free from bounce,
One like those famous fellows who died by guillotine
For honour and the fleur-de-lys and Antoinette the Queen.

The Catholic for Louis, the Protestant for George,
Each captain drew as bright a sword as saintly smiths could forge;
And both were simple seamen, but both could understand
How each was bound to win or die for flag and native land.

The French ship was 'La Surveillante', which means the watchful maid;
She folded up her head-dress and began to cannonade.
Her hull was clean, and ours was foul; we had to spread more sail.
On canvas, stays, and topsail yards her bullets came like hail.



A BALLAD FOR A BOY

W. CORY

Sore smitten were both captains, and many lads beside,
And still to cut our rigging the foreign gunners tried.
A sail-clad spar came flapping down athwart a blazing
gun;
We could not quench the rushing flames, and so the
Frenchman won.

Our quarter-deck was crowded; the waist was all aglow;
Men hung upon the taffrail half scorched, but loth to go;
Our captain sat where once he stood, and would not
quit his chair:
He bade his comrades leap for life, and leave him bleed-
ing there.

The guns were hushed on either side, the Frenchmen
lowered boats,
They flung us planks and hencoops, and everything that
floats.
They risked their lives, good fellows, to bring their rivals
aid.
'Twas by the conflagration the peace was strangely
made.

'La Surveillante' was like a sieve; the victors had no rest.
They had to dodge the east wind to reach the port of
Brest,
And where the waves leapt lower and the riddled ship
went slower,
In triumph, yet in funeral guise, came fisher-boats to
tow her.

A BALLAD FOR A BOY

They dealt with us as brethren; they mourned for Farmer
dead;

And as the wounded captives passed each Breton bowed
the head.

Then spoke the French Lieutenant, 'Twas fire that won,
not we.

You never struck your flag to us; you'll go to England
free.'

'Twas the sixth day of October, seventeen hundred
seventy nine—

A year when nations ventured against us to combine.

'Quebec' was burnt and Farmer slain, by us remem-
bered not;

But thanks be to the French book wherein they're not
forgot.

Now you, if you've to fight the French, my youngster,
bear in mind

Those seamen of King Louis so chivalrous and kind;

Think of the Breton gentlemen who took our lads to
Brest,

And treat some rescued Breton as a comrade and a
guest.

W. CORY

(1822-92)

A STRANGE CONTEST

BETWEEN Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose:
The spectacles set them unhappily wrong;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning;
While chief baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

‘In behalf of the Nose, it will quickly appear,
And your lordship,’ he said, ‘will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession time out of mind.’

Then holding the spectacles up to the court—
‘Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle,
As wide as the ridge of the Nose is: in short,
Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

‘Again, would your lordship a moment suppose
('Tis a case that has happened, and may be again)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose!
Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then?

‘On the whole, it appears—and my argument shows
With a reasoning the court will never condemn—
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.’

A STRANGE CONTEST

Then shifting his side (as a lawyer knows how)
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes;
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed, with a grave solemn tone,
Decisive and clear, without one if or but,
That whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
By day-light or candle-light, Eyes should be shut.

W. COWPER

(1731-1800)

THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY

THE noon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
And high in pedigree
(Two nymphs, adorned with every grace,
That spaniel found for me),

Now wantoned lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
His lilies newly blown;
Their beauties I intent surveyed;
And one I wished my own.

W. COWPER

With cane extended far I sought
To steer it close to land;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixed considerate face,
And puzzling set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble finished, I returned.
Beau trotting far before
The floating wreath again discerned,
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropped
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, 'The world,' I cried,
'Shall hear of this thy deed;
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed;

But, chief, myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all.'

W. COWPER
(1731-1800)

THE PRIVATE OF THE BUFFS

LAST night, among his fellow roughs,
He jested, quaffed, and swore,
A drunken private of the Buffs,
Who never looked before.

To-day, beneath the foeman's frown,
He stands in Elgin's place,
Ambassador from Britain's crown
And type of all her race.

Poor, reckless, rude, low-born, untaught,
Bewildered, and alone,
A heart, with English instinct fraught,
He yet can call his own.

Ay, tear his body limb from limb,
Bring cord, or axe, or flame:
He only knows, that not through him
Shall England come to shame.

Far Kentish hop-fields round him seemed,
Like dreams, to come and go;
Bright leagues of cherry-blossom gleamed,
One sheet of living snow;
The smoke, above his father's door,
In grey soft eddyings hung:
Must he then watch it rise no more,
Doomed by himself, so young?

Yes, honour calls. With strength like steel
He put the vision by.
Let dusky Indians whine and kneel;
An English lad must die.

SIR FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE

And thus, with eyes that would not shrink,
With knee to man unbent,
Unflinching on its dreadful brink,
To his red grave he went.

Vain, mightiest fleets of iron framed;
Vain, those all-shattering guns;
Unless proud England keep, untamed,
The strong heart of her sons.
So, let his name through Europe ring—
A man of mean estate,
Who died, as firm as Sparta's king,
Because his soul was great.

SIR FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE

(1810-88)

A BALLAD OF ST. CHRISTOPHER

THERE dwelt at the court of a good king
A giant huge and black;
He could take up Gedney Church
And carry it on his back;
A giant fierce and grim as he
No king had in his giantry.

This paynim wight was dull of wit,
But he held fast one thing,
That the strongest man in all the world
Should serve the strongest king;
A purpose firm he had in mind,
The mightiest king on earth to find.

A BALLAD OF ST. CHRISTOPHER

A minstrel sang a song of the Devil;
The giant gaped to see
That the king made at the Devil's name
A sign with fingers three.
'Ho! ho!' said the giant, 'I stay not here
To serve a king who goes in fear.'

The giant found the great black Devil,
And did him homage true,
To be his faithful bondservant,
His bidding aye to do;
With his new master night and morn,
He fired farmsteads and trampled corn.

They went on a lonely road one day,
Plotting great harm and loss;
'I must turn back,' the Devil said sudden,
'For here I see a Cross.'
'Ho! ho!' said the giant, 'is here the sign
Of a king whose power is more than thine?'

'Gallows of God!' the Devil said,
And white with rage went he,
'He took the gallows for Himself,
That sure belonged to me;
He took the gallows, He took the thief,
He stole my harvest sheaf by sheaf.

'He broke my gates, He harried my realm,
He freed my prisoned folk,
He crowned His Mother for Eve discrowned;
My kingdom went like smoke;

Where'er I go by night or day
That sign has power to bar my way.

'Great is my might, but against the clan
Of this King I have no charm;
If they touch water, if they touch wood,
I cannot work them harm;
I go a wanderer without rest,
Where fingers three touch brow and breast.'

'God keep thee, Devil,' the giant said;
'Thy riddle I cannot read,
But from thy company here and now
I must depart with speed;
I hold thee but as a beaten knave,
To find that mightiest King I crave.'

The giant came to an old, old man
That worked among his bees;
He gathered wax for the altar-lights
In white beneath green trees;
The sun shone through him, and he, too, shone,
For he was the Blessed Apostle John.

He asked the old man of that King,
Whose bonds slave he would be:
'Through wood,' said St. John, 'there is healing in
water;
His servants all are free.'
He christened him and straightway then
Told of the tasks of christened men.

A BALLAD OF ST. CHRISTOPHER

'Some wear the stone with their bent knees,
Some holy pictures limn,
Some bear the news of Christ to lands
That have not heard of Him.'
The giant said, 'If I had the will
For this, I have no wit nor skill.'

'To ford,' St. John said, 'yonder river
Poor wayfarers essay,
And by the great swiftness of the stream
Many are swept away;
Who carries them over will do a thing
To pleasure greatly the Strong King.'

The giant came to that wild water,
And on its brink did dwell;
He saved the lives of wayfarers
More than a man may tell;
And there it chanced one midnight wild
He heard the cry of a little child.

The child held a globe in his hand;
He begged to cross that night;
The giant set him on his shoulder
As a burden sweet and light;
Into the stream with a careless laugh
He stepped with a palm tree for a staff.

But the child grew heavier and his globe
Until they weighed like lead;
'Deus meus et omnia,
What Child is this?' he said;

R. L. GALES

It seemed as the waves swelled and whirled
He felt the weight of all the world.

Sure all the churches upon earth
He bore with tottering feet:
Rouen, Amiens, Bourges, and Chartres,
Long Sutton, Gedney, Fleet;
So sweet, so terrible the load,
It was as though he carried God.

The bells of all those churches rang
When they had gained the shore;
He saw no child, but a great King
Of might unguessed before:
The King on Whom the world is stayed,
That is the Son of the pure Maid.

'I thank thee, Christopher, that thou
So well hast kept My rule;
Thou hast borne Me with Heaven My throne
And the earth My footstool.'
He felt strange joy within him stir
As the King called him 'Christopher.'

On fairdays and on market days,
Where men to fiddles sing,
They tell of the strongest man on earth
Who served the Mightiest King.
For that great King he served so well,
He loves the song and the fiddèl.

R. L. GALES
(d. 1930)

THE DEMON SHIP

'T WAS off the Wash—the sun went down—the sea
looked black and grim,
For stormy clouds, with murky fleece, were mustering
at the brim;
Titanic shades! enormous gloom! as if the solid night
Of Erebus rose suddenly to seize upon the light.
It was a time for mariners to bear a wary eye,
With such a dark conspiracy between the sea and sky.

Down went my helm—close reefed—the tack held freely
in my hand—
With ballast snug—I put about, and scudded for the
land.
Loud hissed the sea beneath her lee—my little boat flew
fast,
But faster still the rushing storm came borne upon the
blast.
Lord! what a roaring hurricane beset the straining sail!
What furious sleet, with level drift, and fierce assaults of
hail!
What darksome caverns yawn'd before! what jagged
steps behind!
Like battle-steeds, with foamy manes, wild tossing in the
wind.
Each after each sank down astern, exhausted in the
chase,
But where it sank another rose and galloped in its place;

T. HOOD

As black as night—they turned to white, and cast against
the cloud

A snowy sheet, as if each surge upturned a sailor's shroud.
Still flew my boat; alas! alas! her course was nearly run.
Behold yon fatal billow rise—ten billows heaped in one.
With fearful speed the dreary mass came rolling, rolling,
fast,

As if the scooping sea contained one only wave at last.
Still on it came, with horrid roar, a swift pursuing grave;
It seemed as though some cloud had turned its hugeness
to a wave.

Its briny sleet began to beat beforehand in my face.
I felt the rearward keel begin to climb its swelling base.
I saw its alpine hoary head impending over mine.
Another pulse—and down it rushed: an avalanche of
brine.

Brief pause had I on God to cry, or think of wife and
home;

The waters closed—and when I shrieked, I shrieked
below the foam.

Beyond that rush I have no hint of any after deed—
For I was tossing on the waste, as senseless as a weed.

“Where am I? in the breathing world, or in the world of
death?”

With sharp and sudden pang I drew another birth of
breath;

My eyes drank in a doubtful sight, my ears a doubtful
sound—

And was that ship a real ship whose tackle seemed
around?

THE DEMON SHIP

A moon, as if the earthly moon, was shining up aloft;
But were those beams the very beams that I had seen
so oft?

A face, that mocked the human face, before me watched
alone;

But were those eyes the eyes of man that looked against
my own?

Oh! never may the moon again disclose me such a sight
As met my gaze, when first I looked, on that accursed
night.

I've seen a thousand horrid shapes begot of fierce ex-
tremes

Of fever; and most frightful things have haunted in my
dreams:

Hyenas—cats—blood-loving bats—and apes with hate-
ful stare—

Pernicious snakes, and shaggy bulls—the lion, and she-
bear—

Strong enemies, with Judas looks, of treachery and
spite—

Detested features, hardly dimmed and banished by the
light—

Pale-sheeted ghosts, with gory locks, upstarting from
their tombs—

All phantasies and images that flit in midnight glooms—
Hags, goblins, demons, lemures—have made me all
aghast;

But nothing like that Grimly One who stood beside the
mast.

T. HOOD

His cheek was black—his brow was black—his eyes and
hair as dark;
His hand was black, and where it touched, it left a sable
mark;
His throat was black, his vest the same, and when I
looked beneath,
His breast was black—all, all, was black except his grin-
ning teeth.
His sooty crew were like in hue, as black as Afric slaves.
Oh, horror! e'en the ship was black that ploughed the
inky waves.

'Alas!' I cried, 'for love of truth and blessed mercy's sake,
Where am I? In what dreadful ship? Upon what dread-
ful lake?

What shape is that, so very grim, and black as any coal?
It is Mahound, the Evil One, and he has gained my soul!
Oh, mother dear! my tender nurse! dear meadows that
beguiled

My happy days, when I was yet a little sinless child!
My mother dear—my native fields I never more shall
see:

I'm sailing in the Devil's Ship, upon the Devil's Sea.'

Loud laughed that Sable Mariner, and loudly in return
His sooty crew sent forth a laugh that rang from stem to
stern;

A dozen pair of grimly cheeks were crumpled on the
nonce;

As many sets of grinning teeth came shining out at once;



THE DEMON SHIP

T. HOOD

A dozen gloomy shapes at once enjoyed the merry fit,
With shriek and yell, and oaths as well, like demons of
the pit.

They crowed their fill, and then the chief made answer
for the whole—

‘Our skins,’ said he, ‘are black, ye see, because we carry
coal;

You’ll find your mother sure enough, and see your native
fields,

For this here ship has picked you up—the Mary Ann of
Shields.’

T. HOOD

(1799–1845)

AULD ROBIN GRAY

WHEN the sheep are in the fauld, when the cows
come hame,
And a' the weary warld to quiet rest are gane,
The woes of my heart fa' in showers frae my ee
Unkennd by my gudeman, who soundly sleeps by me.

Young Jamie loo'd me weel, and sought me for his bride;
But saving ae crown-piece he'd naething else beside.
To make the crown a pound, my Jamie gaed to sea;
And the crown and the pound, oh! they were baith for
me.

Before he had been gane a twelvemonth and a day
My father brak his arm; our cow was stown away;
My mother she fell sick; my Jamie was at sea;
And auld Robin Gray, oh! he came a-courting me.

My father cou'dna work; my mother cou'dna spin;
I toiled day and night, but their bread I cou'dna win.
Auld Rob maintained them baith, and wi' tears in
his ee
Said, 'Jenny, for their sakes, oh! will you marry me?'

My heart it said na, and I looked for Jamie back;
But hard blew the winds, and his ship was a wrack;
His ship it was a wrack. Why didna Jamie dee?
Or wherefore am I spared to cry out, Woe is me?

LADY ANNE LINDSAY

My father argued sair; my mother didna speak,
But she looked in my face till my heart was like to break;
They gied him my hand, but my heart was in the sea;
And so auld Robin Gray, he was gudeman to me.

I hadna been his wife a week but only four,
When mournfu' as I sat on the stane at my door,
I saw my Jamie's ghaist: I cou'dna think it he
Till he said: 'I'm come hame, my love, to marry thee.'

Oh sair, sair did we greet, and mickle say of a'.
Ae kiss we took, nae mair. I bad him gang awa.
I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to dee;
For Oh! I am but young to cry out, Woe is me!

I gang like a ghaist, and I carena much to spin;
I darena think o' Jamie, for that wad be a sin.
But I will do my best a gude wife to be,
For auld Robin Gray, oh! he is sae kind to me.

LADY ANNE LINDSAY

(1750-1825)

THE BRAVE WOMEN OF TANN

SATE the heavy burghers
In their gloomy hall,
Pondering all the dangers
Likely to befall:
‘Ward they yet, or yield the strangers
Their beleaguered wall?’

‘All our trade is ruined:
Saw I this afar.
Said I not—our markets
Month-long siege will mar?
Let not our good town embark its
Fortunes on this war.

‘Now our folly takes us.
War first hath his share;
Famine now: who dreameth
Bankrupts can repair
Double loss, or likely seemeth
Victors should despair?’

‘And our trade is ruined:
Little that remains
Let us save, to hearse us
From these bloody pains,
Ere the wrathful foe amerce us
Of our farthest gains.’

W. J. LINTON

Up and speaks young Hermann
With the flushing cheek—
‘Shame were it to render
Though the wall be weak.’
Say the old men—‘Let us end or
Certain death we seek.’

In their gloomy chamber
Thus their councils wend:
‘Five of our most trusted
With the morn descend;
Say—so peace may be adjusted
Chained lives we’ll spend.

‘Now home to our women!
They’ll be glad to learn
We have weighed so gravely
Peace hath filled the urn:
Though in truth they’ve borne them bravely
In this weary turn.’

Home unto their women;
But each burgher found
Scorn in place of smiling:
For each good-wife frowned
On this coward reconciling
Peace with honour bound.¹

In their morrow’s council
Woman voices rise:

¹ Shackled, i.e. peace without honour.

THE BRAVE WOMEN OF TANN

‘Count ye babes and women
But as merchandise,
To be trafficked with the foeman—
Things of such a price?’

‘We will man your ramparts;
Ye, who are not men,
Go hide in your coffers!
We will call you when——’
Slid home ’mid the crowd of scoffers
Those five heralds then.

In the morrow’s danger
Women take their share;
Many a sad grey morning
Found them watching there:
Till we learned from their high scorning
To make light of care.

Chief with our gaunt warders
Hermann’s young betrothed
Passed, like victory’s splendour,
In bright courage clothed:
Fear hid, fearful to offend her,
Knowing himself loathed.

Blinding red the sunset!
In that hopeful breast
Stayed the foeman’s arrow.
So ’twas won. The rest—
How despair in strait most narrow
Smote the conqueror’s crest—

W. J. LINTON

Matters not. Our women
Drove him to his den.
'Twas his last invasion;
We've had peace since then.
This is why on state occasion
They precede our men.

W. J. LINTON
(1812-98)

THE DEATH OF KING OLAF

ALL day has the battle raged,
All day have the ships engaged,
But not yet is assuaged
The vengeance of Eric the Earl.

The decks with blood are red,
The arrows of death are sped,
The ships are filled with the dead,
And the spears the champions hurl.

They drift as wrecks on the tide,
The grappling irons are plied,
The boarders climb up the side,
The shouts are feeble and few.

Ah! never shall Norway again
See her sailors come back o'er the main;
They all lie wounded or slain,
Or asleep in the billows blue.

On the deck stands Olaf the King.
Around him whistle and sing
The spears that the foemen fling,
And the stones they hurl with their hands.

In the midst of the stones and the spears
Kolbiorn, the marshal, appears.
His shield in the air he uprears;
By the side of King Olaf he stands.

H. W. LONGFELLOW

Over the slippery wreck
Of the Long Serpent's deck
Sweeps Eric with hardly a check;
His lips with anger are pale.

He hews with his axe at the mast,
Till it falls, with the sails overcast,
Like a snow-covered pine in the vast
Dim forests of Orkadale.

Seeking King Olaf then
He rushes aft with his men,
As a hunter into the den
Of the bear, when he stands at bay.

'Remember Jarl Hakon,' he cries;
When lo! on his wondering eyes,
Two kingly figures arise:
Two Olafs in warlike array!

Then Kolbiorn speaks in the ear
Of King Olaf a word of cheer,
In a whisper that none may hear,
With a smile on his tremulous lip.

Two shields raised high in the air,
Two flashes of golden hair,
Two scarlet meteors' glare,
And both have leaped from the ship.

Earl Eric's men in the boats
Seize Kolbiorn's shield as it floats,
And cry, from their hairy throats,
'See! it is Olaf the King!'



THE DEATH OF KING OLAF

H. W. LONGFELLOW

While far on the opposite side
Floats another shield on the tide,
Like a jewel set in the wide
Sea-current's eddying ring.

There is told a wonderful tale,
How the King stripped off his mail,
Like leaves of the brown sea-kale,
As he swam beneath the main;

But the young grew old and gray,
And never, by night or by day,
In his kingdom of Norroway
Was King Olaf seen again.

H. W. LONGFELLOW

(1807-82)

DAVID GWYN

DAVID GWYN was a Briton bold who pined a slave in
the hulks of Spain,
Taken years since in some mad emprise with Francis
Drake on the Spanish main.
Long in that cruel country he shared the captive's bitter
and hapless lot;
Slowly the dead years passed and left him dreaming still
of the days that were not,
Of tiny Radnor, or stately Brecknock, or Cardigan's
rain-swept heights maybe,
Or green Caermarthen, or rich Glamorgan, or Pem-
broke sitting on either sea.
Sickening within his squalid prison, while still as the
circling seasons came
The fierce sun beat on the brown Sierras, springtide
and summer and autumn the same,
Almost hope failed the dauntless sailor, chained in an
alien and hateful land,
Lonely and friendless, starved and buffeted, none to pity
or understand,
Pining always and ageing yearly as slow time whitened
and bowed his head,
While longing and hate burned high and higher as life
sank lower and hope fell dead,
With brutes for his gaolers, and felons for comrades,
bound to him constantly night and day,
Eleven summers, eleven winters wasted their wearisome
length away.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS

Then there awoke round his floating prison clang of
hammers and bustle of men,
Shipwrights labouring late and early stirred old hopes
in his heart again.

‘Spain will lay waste your hectic island with fire and
sword ere the winter be come,
And you and the rest of your felon crew shall row the
galleys which sack your home.’
The hot blood flushed to the prisoner’s forehead, but
never a word in reply said he,
Toiling obediently days and weeks till the great fleet
sailed on the summer sea,
Splendid galleons towering skyward with gilded masts
and with streamers brave,
Floating proudly to martial music over the blue Lusita-
nian wave,
Four great galleys leading the van, and in one midst the
close-thronged benches sate
David Gwyn, a forgotten oarsman, nursing a burning
heart of hate.

So along the windless ocean slow the great Armada sped,
Two unclouded weeks of summer blazed the hot sun
overhead.
Hourly from the high deck-pulpits preaching rose and
chant and prayer,
And the cloying fumes of incense on the brisk Atlantic
air;
Courtiers fine and sea-worn sailors jesting the slow hours
away,

DAVID GWYN

Silken sails and blazoned standards flapping idly day by
day,
And within his high poop-turret, more than mortal to
behold,
The High Admiral Medina lounging idly, clothed with
gold:
Not a thought of peril touched them, not a dream of
what might come,
Proudly sailing, sure of conquest, with the benison of
Rome,
And far down among the oarsmen's benches, fainting,
desperate,
David Gwyn, a patriot helpless with a burning heart of
hate.

With the roaring Bay of Biscay louder winds and greyer
skies,
And the galleons plunge and labour, and the rolling
mountains rise;
Blacker loom the drifting storm-clouds, fiercer grow the
wind and sea,
Far and wide the galleons scatter, driving, drifting help-
lessly.
Higher mount the thundering surges; tossed to heaven,
or fathoms down,
Rear or plunge the cumbrous galleys while the helpless
oarsmen drown.
Like a diver the *Diana* slides head first beneath the
wave,
Not a soul of all her hundreds may her labouring con-
sorts save.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS

Now to larboard, now to starboard, shattered, tossed
from side to side,
Helpless rolls the great Armada, shorn of all its pomp
and pride.
Down between those toppling ridges, groaning, strain-
ing in his place,
David Gwyn among the oarsmen sits with triumph in
his face.

Then amid the roaring seas, when hope was gone and
death was near,
And the hearts of all the Spaniards sinking, failing them
for fear,
Boldly to the haughty Captain, David Gwyn the oars-
man went,
Veiling with a fearless frankness all the depth of his
intent.
'Quick, Señor! the ship is sinking; like her consort will
she be,
Buried soon with slaves and freemen, fathoms deep be-
neath the sea.
Give me leave and I will save her; I have fought the
winds before,
Fought and conquered storms and foemen many a time
on sea and shore.'
And the haughty Captain, knowing David Gwyn a sea-
man bold,
Since upon the Spanish main the foemen sailed and
fought of old,
Answered, turning to his prisoner: 'Save the ship, and
thou shalt gain

DAVID GWYN

Freedom from thy life-long fetters, guerdon from the
Lord of Spain.'

Then from out the prisoner's eye there flashed a sudden
gleam of flame,

And a light of secret triumph o'er his clouded visage
came,

Thinking of his Cymric homestead and the fair years
that were gone,

And his glory who should save her from the thralldom of
the Don.

'I will save your ship,' he answered; 'trust me wholly,
have no fear:

Pack the soldiers under hatches; leave the main deck
free and clear.'

Doubting much the Don consented; only, lest the slaves
should rise,

By each oarsman sat a soldier, watching him with jealous
eyes.

Little knew he of the cunning, secret signs, and watch-
words born

Of long years of cruel fetters, stripes and hunger, spite
and scorn.

Little thought he every prisoner as in misery he sate
Hid a dagger in his waistband, waiting for the call of Fate.

David Gwyn, the valiant seaman, long time battled with
the main,

Till the furious storm-wind slackened and the ship was
safe again.

Sudden then he gave the signal, raised his arm and bared
his head.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS

Every oarsman rising swiftly stabbed his hapless warder
dead,
Seized his arms, and, fired with conquest, mad with vengeance, like a flood
On the crowded 'tween-decks bursting, left the Spaniards
in their blood.

David Gwyn was now the Captain, and the great ship
all his own;
Well the slaves obeyed their comrade, thus to sudden
greatness grown.
Straight for France the stout *Vasana* shaping, lo upon her
lee
Don Diego in the *Royal*, foaming through the stricken
sea,
Driven by full four hundred oarsmen, nigh the monstrous galley came.
Then from out her thundering broadside swift as lightning burst the flame;
In among Gwyn's thronging seamen straight the hurtling missiles sped;
Nine strong sailors in a moment lay around their Captain
dead.

David Gwyn, the dauntless Captain, turning to his comrades then—
'God has given you freedom; earn it: fear not; quit yourselves like men.
Lay the ship aboard the *Royal*: free your comrades and be free.'
The strong oarsmen bent, obedient, rowing swiftly,
silently,

DAVID GWYN

Till, as if in middle ocean striking on a hidden rock,
All the stout *Vasana's* timbers, quivering, reeling with the
 shock,
Straight on board the crowded *Royal* leapt that band of
 desperate men,
Freed the slaves, and left no Spaniard who might tell the
 tale again;
And the sister galleys stately with fair winds sped safely on,
Under David Gwyn, their Captain, and cast anchor at
 Bayonne.
And King Henry gave them largesse, and they parted
 every one
Free once more to his own country, and their evil days
 were done.

David Gwyn to England coming won the favour of the
 Queen;
Well her Grace esteemed his valour in the perils that had
 been.
What! had those swift, mighty galleys, which could wind
 and tide defy,
Winged with speed the slow Armada when our weak
 fleet hovered by?
Had not then that sullen quarry, ploughing helpless on
 the plain,
Turned and crushed the nimble hunters, and re-writ the
 fate of Spain?
Who shall tell? But his were doughty deeds and worthy
 lasting fame,
Though the country he delivered never yet has known
 his name.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS

Did he seek again the home of his youth, did he let the
years go peacefully by,
Breathing the sweet clear air of the hills, till his day was
done and he came to die?
By tiny Radnor, or stately Brecknock, or Cardigan's
rain-swept heights maybe,
Or green Caermarthen, or rich Glamorgan, or Pem-
broke sitting on either sea?
Did he dream sometimes 'mid the nights of storm of
those long-dead years in the hulks of Spain,
That stealthy onset, that dread revenge, with the wild
winds drowning the cries of pain?
Did the old man shudder to think of the blood, when the
knife pierced deep to the Spaniard's heart?
Nay, to each of us all is his Life assigned, his Work, his
Fate, his allotted Part.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS

(1833-1907)

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

The scene is in Yorkshire during the Civil War. Lord Rokeby is a prisoner in the hands of Oswald Wycliffe, lord of Barnard Castle. Bertram Risingham attacks Rokeby Castle to secure a treasure stored there. He is in league with Oswald, who wishes to marry his son, Wilfrid, a gentle poetic youth, to Lord Rokeby's daughter Matilda. Matilda loves Redmond O'Neale, Lord Rokeby's page.

‘AND whither would you lead me, then?’
Quoth the Friar of orders grey;
And the ruffians twain replied again,
‘By a dying woman to pray.’

‘I see,’ he said, ‘a lovely sight,
A sight bodes little harm,
A lady as a lily bright,
With an infant on her arm.’

‘Then do thine office, Friar grey,
And see thou shrive her free!
Else shall the sprite, that parts to-night,
Fling all its guilt on thee.

‘Let mass be said, and trentals¹ read,
When thou’rt to convent gone,
And bid the bell of St. Benedict
Toll out its deepest tone.’

The shrift is done, the Friar is gone,
Blindfolded as he came.
Next morning all in Littlecot Hall
Were weeping for their dame.

¹ Set of thirty successive daily masses for the dead.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Wild Darrell is an altered man,
The village crones can tell;
He looks pale as clay, and strives to pray,
If he hears the convent bell.

If prince or peer cross Darrell's way,
He'll beard him in his pride;
If he meets a Friar of orders grey,
He droops and turns aside.

'Harper! methinks thy magic lays,'
Matilda said, 'can goblins raise.
Well-nigh my fancy can discern,
Near the dark porch, a visage stern;
E'en now, in yonder shadowy nook,
I see it—Redmond, Wilfrid, look!—
A human form distinct and clear—
God, for thy mercy!—It draws near.'
She saw too true. Stride after stride,
The centre of that chamber wide
Fierce Bertram gained; then made a stand,
And, proudly waving with his hand,
Thundered—'Be still, upon your lives!—
He bleeds who speaks, he dies who strives.'
Behind their chief the robber crew
Forth from the darkened portal drew
In silence—save that echo dread
Returned their heavy measured tread.
The lamp's uncertain lustre gave
Their arms to gleam, their plumes to wave;
File after file in order pass,

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

Like forms on Banquo's mystic glass.
Then, halting at their leader's sign,
At once they formed and curved their line,
Hemming within its crescent drear
Their victims, like a herd of deer.
Another sign, and to the aim
Levelled at once their muskets came,
As waiting but their chieftain's word
To make their fatal volley heard.

Back in a heap the menials drew;
Yet, even in mortal terror, true,
Their pale and startled group oppose
Between Matilda and the foes.
'O, haste thee, Wilfrid!' Redmond cried;
'Undo that wicket by thy side!
Bear hence Matilda—gain the wood—
The pass may be a while made good—
Thy band, ere this, must sure be nigh—
O speak not—dally not—but fly!'—
While yet the crowd their motions hide,
Through the low wicket-door they glide.
Through vaulted passages they wind,
In Gothic intricacy twined;
Wilfrid half led, and half he bore,
Matilda to the postern-door,
And safe beneath the forest tree
The Lady stands at liberty.
The moonbeams, the fresh gale's caress,
Renewed suspended consciousness.
'Where's Redmond?' eagerly she cries:

SIR WALTER SCOTT

'Thou answerest not—he dies! he dies!
And thou hast left him, all bereft
Of mortal aid—with murderers left.
I know it well—he would not yield
His sword to man—his doom is sealed.
For my scorned life, which thou hast bought
At price of his, I thank thee not.'

The unjust reproach, the angry look,
The heart of Wilfrid could not brook.
'Lady,' he said, 'my band so near,
In safety thou mayest rest thee here.
For Redmond's death thou shalt not mourn,
If mine can buy his safe return.'
He turned away—his heart throbbed high,
The tear was bursting from his eye;
The sense of her injustice pressed
Upon the maid's distracted breast.
'Stay, Wilfrid, stay! all aid is vain.'
He heard, but turned him not again;
He reaches now the postern-door,
Now enters—and is seen no more.

With all the agony that e'er
Was gendered 'twixt suspense and fear
She watched the line of windows tall,
Whose Gothic lattice lights the Hall,
Distinguished by the paly red
The lamps of dim reflection shed,
While all beside in wan moonlight
Each grated casement glimmered white:

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

No sight of harm, no sound of ill;
It is a deep and midnight still.
Who looked upon the scene had guessed
All in the castle were at rest:
When sudden on the windows shone
A lightning flash, just seen and gone.
A shot is heard—again the flame
Flashed thick and fast—a volley came.
Then echoed wildly, from within,
Of shout and scream the mingled din,
And weapon-clash and maddening cry,
Of those who kill, and those who die.
As filled the Hall with sulphurous smoke,
More red, more dark, the death-flash broke;
And forms were on the lattice cast,
That struck, or struggled, as they passed.

What sounds upon the midnight wind
Approach so rapidly behind?
It is, it is, the tramp of steeds.
Matilda hears the sound; she speeds;
Seizes upon the leader's rein—
'O, haste to aid, ere aid be vain!
Fly to the postern—gain the Hall!'—
From saddle spring the troopers all;
Their gallant steeds, at liberty,
Run wild along the moonlight lea.
But, ere they burst upon the scene,
Full stubborn had the conflict been.
When Bertram marked Matilda's flight
It gave the signal for the fight;

SIR WALTER SCOTT

And Rokeby's veterans, seamed with scars
Of Scotland's and of Erin's wars,
Their momentary panic o'er,
Stood to the arms which then they bore
(For they were weaponed, and prepared
Their mistress on her way to guard).
Then cheered them to the fight O'Neale,
Then pealed the shot, and clashed the steel;
The war-smoke soon with sable breath
Darkened the scene of blood and death,
While on the few defenders close
The Bandits, with redoubled blows,
And, twice driven back, yet fierce and fell
Renew the charge with frantic yell.

Wilfrid has fallen—but o'er him stood
Young Redmond, soiled with smoke and blood,
Cheering his mates with heart and hand
Still to make good their desperate stand.
'Up, comrades, up! in Rokeby halls
Ne'er be it said our courage falls.
What! faint ye for their savage cry,
Or do the smoke-wreaths daunt your eye?
These rafters have returned a shout
As loud at Rokeby's wassail rout,
As thick a smoke these hearths have given
At Hallow-tide or Christmas-even.
Stand to it yet! renew the fight,
For Rokeby's and Matilda's right!
These slaves! they dare not, hand to hand,
Bide buffet from a true man's brand.'

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

Impetuous, active, fierce, and young,
Upon the advancing foes he sprung.
Woe to the wretch at whom is bent
His brandished falchion's sheer descent!
Backward they scattered as he came,
Like wolves before the levin flame,
When, 'mid their howling conclave driven,
Hath glanced the thunderbolt of heaven.
Bertram rushed on—but Harpool clasped
His knees, although in death he gasped,
His falling corpse before him flung,
And round the trammelled ruffian clung.
Just then, the soldiers filled the dome,
And, shouting, charged the felons home
So fiercely, that, in panic dread,
They broke, they yielded, fell, or fled.
Bertram's stern voice they heed no more,
Though heard above the battle's roar;
While, trampling down the dying man,
He strove, with volleyed threat and ban,
In scorn of odds, in fate's despite,
To rally up the desperate fight.

Soon murkier clouds the Hall enfold
Than e'er from battle-thunders rolled;
So dense, the combatants scarce know
To aim or to avoid the blow.
Smothering and blindfold grows the fight—
But soon shall dawn a dismal light.
'Mid cries, and clashing arms, there came
The hollow sound of rushing flame;

SIR WALTER SCOTT

New horrors on the tumult dire
Arise—the Castle is on fire.
Doubtful, if chance had cast the brand,
Or frantic Bertram's desperate hand.
Matilda saw—for frequent broke
From the dim casements gusts of smoke—
Yon tower, which late so clear defined
On the fair hemisphere reclined,
That, pencilled on its azure pure,
The eye could count each embrazure,
Now, swathed within the sweeping cloud,
Seems giant-spectre in his shroud;
Till, from each loop-hole flashing light,
A spout of fire shines ruddy bright,
And, gathering to united glare,
Streams high into the midnight air:
A dismal beacon, far and wide,
That wakened Greta's slumbering side.
Soon all beneath, through gallery long,
And pendant arch, the fire flashed strong,
Snatching whatever could maintain,
Raise, or extend its furious reign;
Startling, with closer cause of dread,
The females who the conflict fled,
And now rushed forth upon the plain,
Filling the air with clamours vain.

But ceased not yet the Hall within
The shriek, the shout, the carnage-din,
Till bursting lattices give proof
The flames have caught the raftered roof.

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

What! wait they till its beams amain
Crash on the slayers and the slain?
The alarm is caught—the drawbridge falls,
The warriors hurry from the walls,
But by the conflagration's light
Upon the lawn renew the fight.
Each struggling felon down was hewed:
Not one could gain the sheltering wood;
But forth the affrighted harper sprung,
And to Matilda's robe he clung.
Her shriek, entreaty, and command
Stopped the pursuer's lifted hand.
Denzil and he alive were ta'en;
The rest, save Bertram, all are slain.

And where is Bertram? Soaring high
The general flame ascends the sky;
In gathered group the soldiers gaze
Upon the broad and roaring blaze,
When, like infernal demon, sent,
Red from his penal element,
To plague and to pollute the air—
His face all gore, on fire his hair,
Forth from the central mass of smoke
The giant form of Bertram broke.
His brandished sword on high he rears,
Then plunged among opposing spears;
Round his left arm his mantle trussed,
Received and foiled three lances' thrust;
Nor these his headlong course withstood,
Like reeds he snapped the tough ashwood.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

In vain his foes around him clung;
With matchless force aside he flung
Their boldest, as the bull at bay
Tosses the ban-dogs from his way;
Through forty foes his path he made,
And safely gained the forest glade.

Scarce was this final conflict o'er,
When from the postern Redmond bore
Wilfrid, who, as of life bereft,
Had in the fatal Hall been left,
Deserted there by all his train;
But Redmond saw, and turned again.
Beneath an oak he laid him down,
That in the blaze gleamed ruddy brown,
And then his mantle's clasp undid;
Matilda held his drooping head,
Till, given to breathe the freer air,
Returning life repaid their care.
He gazed on them with heavy sigh—
'I could have wished even thus to die.'
No more he said—for now with speed
Each trooper had regained his steed;
The ready palfreys stood arrayed
For Redmond and for Rokeby's maid;
Two Wilfrid on his horse sustain;
One leads his charger by the rein.
But oft Matilda looked behind,
As up the Vale of Tees they wind,
Where far the mansion of her sires
Beaconed the dale with midnight fires.

THE BURNING OF ROKEBY

In gloomy arch above them spread,
The clouded heaven lowered bloody red;
Beneath, in sombre light, the flood
Appeared to roll in waves of blood.
Then, one by one, was heard to fall
The tower, the donjon-keep, the Hall:
Each rushing down with thunder sound,
A space the conflagration drowned;
Till, gathering strength, again it rose,
Announced its triumph in its close,
Shook wide its light the landscape o'er,
Then sunk—and Rokeby was no more.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

(1771-1832)

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

The Fiery Cross was a signal used in the Middle Ages to summon the clansmen of the Scottish Highlands to a meeting-place on the outbreak of war. It consisted of a cross of wood, burned at one end and dipped in blood at the other, which was handed on by a series of runners from hamlet to hamlet. (The cross was actually sent round to call out the wild Highlanders as late as the Jacobite rising of 1745.)

Brian the Hermit acts as priest to the plundering tribesmen, in the same way as Friar Tuck did to Robin Hood and his fellow outlaws. He has sanctified the emblem that is to summon the Highlanders to arms against James V of Scotland (1512-42). Roderick Dhu is the chief of Clan-Alpine, the 'Terror of Loch Lomond's side'.

THEN Roderick, with impatient look,
From Brian's hand the symbol took:
'Speed, Malise, speed!' he said, and gave
The crosslet to his henchman brave.
'The muster-place be Lanrick mead—
Instant the time; speed, Malise, speed!'
Like heath-bird, when the hawks pursue,
A barge across Loch Katrine flew;
High stood the henchman on the prow;
So rapidly the barge-men row,
The bubbles, where they launched the boat,
Were all unbroken and afloat,
Dancing in foam and ripple still,
When it had neared the mainland hill;
And from the silver beach's side
Still was the prow three fathom wide,
When lightly bounded to the land
The messenger of blood and brand.

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

Speed, Malise, speed! the dun deer's hide
On fleeter foot was never tied.
Speed, Malise, speed! such cause of haste
Thine active sinews never braced.
Bend 'gainst the steepy hill thy breast,
Burst down like torrent from its crest;
With short and springing footstep pass
The trembling bog and false morass;
Across the brook like roebuck bound,
And thread the brake like questing hound;
The crag is high, the scaur is deep,
Yet shrink not from the desperate leap:
Parched are thy burning lips and brow,
Yet by the fountain pause not now;
Herald of battle, fate, and fear,
Stretch onward in thy fleet career!
The wounded hind thou trackest not now,
Pursuest not maid through greenwood bough,
Nor pliest thou now thy flying pace
With rivals in the mountain race;
But danger, death, and warrior deed,
Are in thy course; speed, Malise, speed!

Fast as the fatal symbol flies,
In arms the huts and hamlets rise;
From winding glen, from upland brown
They poured each hardy tenant down.
Nor slacked the messenger his pace;
He showed the sign, he named the place,
And, pressing forward like the wind,
Left clamour and surprise behind.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

The fisherman forsook the strand;
The swarthy smith took dirk and brand;
With changèd cheer the mower blithe
Left in the half-cut swath the scythe;
The herds without a keeper strayed;
The plough was in mid-furrow stayed;
The falconer tossed his hawk away;
The hunter left the stag at bay:
Prompt at the signal of alarms,
Each son of Alpine rushed to arms;
So swept the tumult and affray
Along the margin of Achray.
Alas, thou lovely lake! that e'er
Thy banks should echo sounds of fear!
The rocks, the bosky thickets, sleep
So stilly on thy bosom deep,
The lark's blithe carol, from the cloud,
Seems for the scene too gaily loud.

Speed, Malise, speed! the lake is passed;
Duncraggan's huts appear at last,
And peep, like moss-grown rocks, half seen,
Half hidden in the copse so green;
There mayest thou rest, thy labour done:
Their Lord shall speed the signal on.
As stoops the hawk upon his prey,
The henchman shot him down the way.
What woeful accents load the gale?
The funeral yell, the female wail!
A gallant hunter's sport is o'er;
A valiant warrior fights no more.

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

Who, in the battle or the chase,
At Roderick's side shall fill his place?
Within the hall, where torches' ray
Supplies the excluded beams of day,
Lies Duncan on his lowly bier,
And o'er him streams his widow's tear.
His stripling son stands mournful by;
His youngest weeps, but knows not why;
The village maids and matrons round
The dismal coronach resound.

CORONACH

'He is gone on the mountain,
He is lost to the forest,
Like a summer-dried fountain,
When our need was the sorest.
The font, reappearing,
From the rain-drops shall borrow,
But to us comes no cheering,
To Duncan no morrow.

'The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory.
The autumn winds rushing
Waft the leaves that are searest,
But our flower was in flushing,
When blighting was nearest.

'Fleet foot on the correi,
Sage counsel in cumber,

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Red hand in the foray,
How sound is thy slumber!
Like the dew on the mountain,
Like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain,
Thou art gone, and for ever.'

See Stumah, who, the bier beside,
His master's corpse with wonder eyed,
Poor Stumah! whom his least halloo
Could send like lightning o'er the dew,
Bristles his crest, and points his ears,
As if some stranger step he hears.
'Tis not a mourner's muffled tread
Who comes to sorrow o'er the dead,
But headlong haste, or deadly fear,
Urge the precipitate career.
All stand aghast: unheeding all,
The henchman bursts into the hall;
Before the dead man's bier he stood;
Held forth the Cross besmeared with blood:
'The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! clansmen, speed!'

Angus, the heir of Duncan's line,
Sprang forth and seized the fatal sign.
In haste the stripling to his side
His father's dirk and broadsword tied;
But when he saw his mother's eye
Watch him in speechless agony,
Back to her opened arms he flew,

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

Pressed on her lips a fond adieu—
‘Alas!’ she sobbed, ‘and yet, be gone,
And speed thee forth, like Duncan’s son!’
One look he cast upon the bier,
Dashed from his eye the gathering tear,
Breathed deep to clear his labouring breast,
And tossed aloft his bonnet crest;
Then, like the high-bred colt, when, freed,
First he essays his fire and speed,
He vanished, and o’er moor and moss
Sped forward with the Fiery Cross.
Suspended was the widow’s tear,
While yet his footsteps she could hear;
And when she marked the henchman’s eye
Wet with unwonted sympathy,
‘Kinsman,’ she said, ‘his race is run,
That should have sped thine errand on;
The oak has fallen; the sapling bough
Is all Duncraggan’s shelter now.
Yet trust I well, his duty done,
The orphan’s God will guard my son.
And you, in many a danger true,
At Duncan’s hest your blades that drew,
To arms, and guard that orphan’s head!
Let babes and women wail the dead.’
Then weapon-clang and martial call
Resounded through the funeral hall,
While from the walls the attendant band
Snatched sword and targe with hurried hand;
And short and flitting energy
Glanced from the mourner’s sunken eye,

SIR WALTER SCOTT

As if the sounds to warrior dear
Might rouse her Duncan from his bier.
But faded soon that borrowed force;
Grief claimed his right, and tears their course.

Ben Ledi saw the Cross of Fire;
It glanced like lightning up Strathyre;
O'er dale and hill the summons flew,
Nor rest nor pause young Angus knew;
The tear that gathered in his eye
He left the mountain breeze to dry;
Until, where Teith's young waters roll,
Betwixt him and a wooded knoll,
That graced the sable strath with green,
The chapel of St. Bride was seen.
Swollen was the stream, remote the bridge,
But Angus paused not on the edge;
Though the dark waves danced dizzily,
Though reeled his sympathetic eye,
He dashed amid the torrent's roar:
His right hand high the crosslet bore,
His left the pole-axe grasped, to guide
And stay his footing in the tide.
He stumbled twice—the foam splashed high,
With hoarser swell the stream raced by;
And had he fallen, for ever there
Farewell Duncraggan's orphan heir!
But still, as if in parting life,
Firmer he grasped the Cross of strife,
Until the opposing bank he gained,
And up the chapel pathway strained.

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

A blithesome rout, that morning tide,
Had sought the chapel of St. Bride.
Her troth Tombea's Mary gave
To Norman, heir of Armandave.
And, issuing from the Gothic arch,
The bridal now resumed their march.
In rude but glad procession came
Bonneted sire and coif-clad dame;
And plaided youth, with jest and jeer,
Which snooded maiden would not hear;
And children, that, unwitting why,
Lent the gay shout their shrilly cry;
And minstrels, that in measures vied
Before the young and bonny bride,
Whose downcast eye and cheek disclose
The tear and blush of morning rose.
With virgin step and bashful hand
She held the 'kerchief's snowy band;
The gallant bridegroom by her side
Beheld his prize with victor's pride,
And the glad mother in her ear
Was closely whispering word of cheer.

Who meets them at the churchyard gate?
The messenger of fear and fate!
Haste in his hurried accent lies,
And grief is swimming in his eyes.
All dripping from the recent flood,
Panting and travel-soiled he stood,
The fatal sign of fire and sword
Held forth, and spoke the appointed word:

SIR WALTER SCOTT

'The muster-place is Lanrick mead;
Speed forth the signal! Norman, speed!'
And must he change so soon the hand,
Just linked to his by holy band,
For the fell Cross of blood and brand?
And must the day, so blithe that rose,
And promised rapture in the close,
Before its setting hour divide
The bridegroom from the plighted bride?
O fatal doom! it must! it must!
Clan-Alpine's cause, her Chieftain's trust,
Her summons dread, brook no delay;
Stretch to the race; away! away!

Yet slow he laid his plaid aside,
And, lingering, eyed his lovely bride,
Until he saw the starting tear
Speak woe he might not stop to cheer;
Then, trusting not a second look,
In haste he sped him up the brook,
Nor backward glanced, till on the heath
Where Lubnaig's lake supplies the Teith.
What in the racer's bosom stirred?
The sickening pang of hope deferred,
And memory, with a torturing train
Of all his morning visions vain.
Mingled with love's impatience came
The manly thirst for martial fame;
The stormy joy of mountaineers,
Ere yet they rush upon the spears;
And zeal for Clan and Chieftain burning,

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

And hope, from well-fought field returning,
With war's red honours on his crest,
To clasp his Mary to his breast.
Stung by such thoughts, o'er bank and brae,
Like fire from flint he glanced away,
While high resolve, and feeling strong,
Burst into voluntary song:—

SONG

'The heath this night must be my bed,
The bracken curtain for my head,
My lullaby the warder's tread,
 Far, far from love and thee, Mary;
To-morrow eve, more stilly laid,
My couch may be my bloody plaid,
My vesper song, thy wail, sweet maid!
 It will not waken me, Mary.

'I may not, dare not, fancy now
The grief that clouds thy lovely brow;
I dare not think upon thy vow,
 And all it promised me, Mary.
No fond regret must Norman know;
When bursts Clan-Alpine on the foe,
His heart must be like bended bow,
 His foot like arrow free, Mary.

'A time will come with feeling fraught,
For, if I fall in battle fought,
Thy hapless lover's dying thought
 Shall be a thought on thee, Mary.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

And if returned from conquered foes,
How blithely will the evening close,
How sweet the linnet sing repose,
 To my young bride and me, Mary !'

Not faster o'er thy heathery braes,
Balquidder, speeds the midnight blaze,
Rushing, in conflagration strong,
Thy deep ravines and dells along,
Wrapping thy cliffs in purple glow,
And reddening the dark lakes below;
Nor faster speeds it, nor so far,
As o'er thy heaths the voice of war.
The signal roused to martial coil
The sullen margin of Loch Voil,
Waked still Loch Doine, and to the source
Alarmed, Balvaig, thy swampy course;
Thence southward turned its rapid road
Adown Strath Gartney's valley broad,
Till rose in arms each man might claim
A portion in Clan-Alpine's name,
From the grey sire, whose trembling hand
Could hardly buckle on his brand,
To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
Were yet scarce terror to the crow.
Each valley, each sequestered glen,
Mustered its little horde of men,
That met as torrents from the height
In Highland dales their streams unite,
Still gathering, as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong,

THE PROGRESS OF THE FIERY CROSS

Till at the rendezvous they stood
By hundreds prompt for blows and blood:
Each trained to arms since life began;
Owning no tie but to his clan—
No oath, but by his chieftain's hand—
No law, but Roderick Dhu's command.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

(1771-1832)

THE WELL OF ST. KEYNE

A WELL there is in the west country,
And a clearer one never was seen;
There is not a wife in the west country
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne.

An oak and an elm-tree stand beside,
And behind doth an ash-tree grow,
And a willow from the bank above
Droops to the water below.

A traveller came to the Well of St. Keyne.
Joyfully he drew nigh,
For from cock-crow he had been travelling,
And there was not a cloud in the sky.

He drank of the water so cool and clear,
For thirsty and hot was he,
And he sat down upon the bank
Under the willow-tree.

There came a man from the house hard by
At the Well to fill his pail;
On the Well-side he rested it,
And he bade the stranger hail.

'Now art thou a bachelor, stranger?' quoth he,
'For an if thou hast a wife,
The happiest draught thou hast drunk this day
That ever thou didst in thy life.

THE WELL OF ST. KEYNE

‘Or has thy good woman, if one thou hast,
Ever here in Cornwall been?
For an if she have, I’ll venture my life
She has drunk of the Well of St. Keyne.’

‘I have left a good woman who never was here,’
The stranger he made reply,
‘But that my draught should be the better for that,
I pray you answer me why.’

‘St. Keyne,’ quoth the Cornish-man, ‘many a time
Drank of this crystal Well,
And before the Angel summoned her,
She laid on the water a spell.

‘If the husband of this gifted Well
Shall drink before his wife,
A happy man thenceforth is he,
For he shall be master for life.

‘But if the wife should drink of it first—
God help the husband then!’
The stranger stooped to the Well of St. Keyne,
And drank of the water again.

‘You drank of the Well I warrant betimes?’
He to the Cornish-man said:
But the Cornish-man smiled as the stranger spake,
And sheepishly shook his head.

R. SOUTHEY

'I hastened as soon as the wedding was done,
And left my wife in the porch;
But i' faith she had been wiser than me,
For she took a bottle to church.'

R. SOUTHEY

(1774-1843)

THALABA AND THE MAGIC THREAD

HE found a woman in the cave,
A solitary woman,
Who by the fire was spinning,
And singing as she spun.
The pine boughs were cheerfully blazing,
And her face was bright with the flame;
Her face was as a damsel's face,
And yet her hair was grey.
She bade him welcome with a smile,
And still continued spinning,
And singing as she spun.

The thread she spun, it gleamed like gold
In the light of the odorous fire,
Yet was it so wondrously thin,
That, save when it shone in the light,
You might look for it closely in vain.
The youth sate watching it,
And she observed his wonder,
And then again she spake,
And still her speech was song;
'Now twine it round thy hands, I say;
Now twine it round thy hands, I pray;
My thread is small, my thread is fine,
But he must be
A stronger than thee,
Who can break this thread of mine.'

R. SOUTHEY

And up she raised her bright blue eyes,
And sweetly she smiled on him,
And he conceived no ill;
And round and round his right hand,
And round and round his left,
He wound the thread so fine.
And then again the woman spake,
And still her speech was song,
'Now thy strength, O stranger, strain.
Now then break the slender chain.'

Thalaba strove, but the thread
By magic hands was spun,
And in his cheek the flush of shame
Arose, commixed with fear.
She beheld and laughed at him,
And then again she sung,
'My thread is small, my thread is fine,
But he must be
A stronger than thee,
Who can break this thread of mine.'

And up she raised her bright blue eyes,
And fiercely she smiled on him:
'I thank thee, I thank thee, Hodeirah's Son.
I thank thee for doing what can't be undone—
For binding thyself in the chain I have spun.'
Then from his head she wrenched
A lock of his raven hair,
And cast it in the fire,

THALABA AND THE MAGIC THREAD

And cried aloud as it burnt,
'Sister! Sister! hear my voice!
Sister! Sister! come and rejoice!

 The thread is spun,
 The prize is won,
 The work is done,
For I have made captive Hodeirah's Son.'

R. SOUTHEY
(1774-1843)

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Part I

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
 Skimming down to Camelot:

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

Part II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:

LORD TENNYSON

There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves;
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.



THE LADY OF SHALOTT

LORD TENNYSON

A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot;
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather;
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot:
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
'The Lady of Shalott.'

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.

LORD TENNYSON

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
 ‘The Lady of Shalott.’

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, ‘She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott.’

LORD TENNYSON

(1809-92)

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

II EODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarmed overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either failed to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And through the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reigned.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog, and wolf, and boar, and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallowed in the gardens of the king.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straightened, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groaned for the Roman legions here again,
And Caesar's eagle: then his brother king,
Rience, assailed him: last a heathen horde,
- Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crowned,
Though not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the king
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or marked not, if she saw,
One among many, though his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he passed,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitched
His tents beside the forest. And he drave

LORD TENNYSON

The heathen, and he slew the beast, and felled
The forest, and let in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight;
And so returned.

For while he lingered there,
A doubt that ever smouldered in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flashed forth and into war: for most of these
Made head against him, crying, 'Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the king;
This is the son of Anton, not the king.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be joined with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vexed—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vexed with waste dreams? for saving I be joined
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Victor and lord. But were I joined with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

And Arthur from the field of battle sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—'How should I that am a king,
However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and called
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
'Sir king, there be but two old men that know:
And each is twice as old as I; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther through his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did

LORD TENNYSON

In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me:
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the king said,
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answered, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the king—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this head:
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropped from heaven: but my belief
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that held

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
And daughters had she borne him—one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war:
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther entered in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compassed by the power of the king,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftmess: afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vexed his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Delivered at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child

LORD TENNYSON

Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and reared him with her own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"
A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin through his craft,
And while the people clamoured for a king,
Had Arthur crowned; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the king debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the king
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas:
Ye come from Arthur's court: think ye this king—
So few his knights, however brave they be—
Hath body enough to beat his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crowned on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee." Then the king in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flushed, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheered his Table Round
With large divine and comfortable words
Beyond my tongue to tell thee, I beheld
From eye to eye through all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the king:
And ere it left their faces, through the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

LORD TENNYSON

‘And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

‘And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the king his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curled about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

‘There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur rowed across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
“Take me,” but turn the blade and you shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
“Cast me away.” And sad was Arthur’s face
Taking it, but old Merlin counselled him,
“Take thou and strike. The time to cast away
Is yet far-off.” So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.’

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and asked :
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister'; and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I';
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' asked the King.
She answered, 'These be secret things,' and signed
To those two sons to pass and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and followed by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half heard: the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, 'What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorlois, yea and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world!"'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

LORD TENNYSON

‘O King!’ she cried, ‘and I will tell thee true:
He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wished that I were dead; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seemed, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

‘But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin’s master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage,
And when I entered told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the king,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil passed away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Left the still king, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending through the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seemed in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon winged, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropped to the cove, and watched the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stooped and caught the babe, and cried, "The King!
Here is an heir for Uther." And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lashed at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter followed calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same child," he said,
"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told." And saying this the seer
Went through the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be questioned any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and asked him if these things were truth—
The shining dragon and the naked child

LORD TENNYSON

Descending in the glory of the seas—
He laughed as is his wont, and answered me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

‘“Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man’s wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.”

‘So Merlin riddling angered me; but thou
Fear not to give this king thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing through the minds of men,
And echoed by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the king; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Though men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king.’

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing ‘Shall I answer yea or nay?’
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Streamed to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours!'
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, and the king stood out in heaven,
Crowned. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honoured most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen; and watched him from the gates;
And Lancelot passed away among the flowers
(For then was latter April) and returned
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the king
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights

LORD TENNYSON

Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their king.'

Then at the marriage feast came in from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Great lords, who claimed the tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn
To fight my wars, and worship me their king;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay': so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and through that strength the king
Drew in the petty principdoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reigned.

LORD TENNYSON

(1809-92)

KING CANUTE

KING CANUTE was weary-hearted, he had reigned for
years a score;
Battling, struggling, pushing, fighting, killing much, and
robbing more;
And he thought upon his actions, walking by the wild
seashore.

'Twixt the Chancellor and Bishop walked the King with
steps sedate;
Chamberlains and Grooms came after, Silver-sticks and
Gold-sticks great,
Chaplains, Aides-de-Camp, and Pages—all the officers
of state.

Sliding after like his shadow, pausing when he chose to
pause,
If a frown his face contracted, straight the courtiers
dropped their jaws;
If to laugh the King was minded, out they burst in loud
hee-haws.

But that day a something vexed him, that was clear to
old and young;
Thrice his Grace had yawned at table when his favourite
gleeman sung—
Once the Queen would have consoled him but he bade
her hold her tongue.

‘Something ails my gracious master,’ cried the Keeper of the Seal;

‘Sure, my Lord, it is the lampreys served at dinner, or the veal.’

‘Psha!’ exclaimed the angry Monarch, ‘Keeper, ’tis not that I feel.

‘’Tis the heart and not the dinner, fool! that doth my rest impair;

Can a King be great as I am, prithee, and yet know no care?

Oh! I’m sick, and tired, and weary.’ Some one cried, ‘The King’s arm-chair!’

Then towards the lackeys turning, quick my lord the Keeper nodded;

Straight the King’s great chair was brought him by two footmen able-bodied;

Languidly he sank into it: it was comfortably wadded.

‘Leading on my fierce companions,’ cried he, ‘over storm and brine,

I have fought and I have conquered; where was glory like to mine?’

Loudly all the courtiers echoed, ‘Where is glory like to thine?’

‘What avail me all my kingdoms? Weary am I now, and old;

Those fair sons I have begotten long to see me dead and cold;

Would I were, and quiet buried underneath the silent mould.

KING CANUTE

'Oh! remorse, the writhing serpent, at my bosom tears
and bites;

Horrid, horrid things I look on though I put out all the
lights;

Ghosts of ghastly recollections troop about my bed of
nights.

'Cities burning, convents blazing red with sacrilegious
fires;

Mothers weeping, virgins screaming vainly for their
slaughtered sires.'

'Such a tender conscience,' cries the Bishop, 'every one
admires.

'But for such unpleasant bygones cease, my gracious
Lord, to search;

They're forgotten and forgiven by our holy Mother
Church.

Never, never does she leave her benefactors in the lurch.

'Look, the land is crowned with minsters which your
Grace's bounty raised;

Abbeys filled with holy men, where you and Heaven are
daily praised.

You, my Lord, to think of dying? On my conscience,
I'm amazed.'

'Nay, I feel,' replied King Canute, 'that my end is draw-
ing near.'

'Don't say so,' exclaimed the courtiers (striving each to
squeeze a tear);

'Sure your Grace is strong and lusty and may live this
fifty year!'

‘Live these fifty years!’ the Bishop roared (with action made to suit);

‘Are you mad, my good Lord Keeper, thus to speak of King Canute?’

Men have lived a thousand years, and sure his Majesty will do’t.

‘Adam, Enoch, Lamech, Cainan, Mahaleel, Methusela, Lived nine hundred years apiece; and mayn’t the King as well as they?’

‘Fervently,’ exclaimed the Keeper, ‘fervently I trust he may.’

‘He to die!’ resumed the Bishop; ‘he, a mortal like to us? Death was not for him intended, though *communis omnibus*. Keeper, you are irreligious for to talk and cavil thus.

‘With his wondrous skill in healing ne’er a doctor can compete;

Loathsome lepers, if he touch them, start up clean upon their feet;

Surely he could raise the dead up did his Highness think it meet.

‘Did not once the Jewish Captain stop the sun upon the hill,

And, the while he slew the foemen, bid the silver moon stand still?’

So, no doubt, could gracious Canute if it were his sacred will.’

KING CANUTE

‘Might I stay the sun above us, good Sir Bishop?’ Canute
cried;

‘Could I bid the silver moon to pause upon her heavenly
ride?’

If the moon obeys my orders, sure I can command the
tide.

‘Will the advancing waves obey me, Bishop, if I make
the sign?’

Said the Bishop, bowing lowly, ‘Land and sea, my Lord,
are thine.’

Canute looked toward the ocean—‘Back,’ he said, ‘thou
foaming brine!’

‘From the sacred shore I stand on, I command thee to
retreat;

Venture not, thou stormy rebel, to approach thy master’s
seat;

Ocean, be thou still! I bid thee come not nearer to my
feet.’

But the angry ocean answered with a louder, deeper
roar,

And the rapid waves drew nearer, falling sounding on
the shore—

Back the Keeper and the Bishop, back the King and
courtiers bore.

And he sternly bade them never more to kneel to human
clay,

But alone to praise and worship That which earth and
seas obey;

W. M. THACKERAY

And his golden crown of empire never wore he from that day.

King Canute is dead and gone; parasites exist alway.

W. M. THACKERAY

(1811-63)

THE SPILT PEARLS

THIS courtiers of the Caliph crave—
‘Oh, say how this may be,
That of thy slaves, this Ethiop slave
Is best beloved of thee?

‘For he is hideous as the Night;
And when has ever chose
A nightingale for its delight,
A hueless, scentless rose?’

The Caliph then—‘No features fair
Nor comely mien are his:
Love is the beauty he doth wear,
And love his glory is.

‘Once when a camel of my train
There fell in narrow street,
From broken basket rolled amain
Rich pearls before my feet.

‘I, winking to my slaves, that I
Would freely give them these,
At once upon the spoil they fly,
The costly boon to seize.

THE SPILT PEARLS

‘One only at my side remained—
Beside this Ethiop none;
He, moveless as the steed he reined,
Behind me sat alone.

“What will thy gain, good fellow, be,
Thus lingering at my side?”
“My King, that I shall faithfully
Have guarded thee,” he cried.

‘True servant’s title he may wear,
He only, who has not
For his lord’s gift, how rich soe’er,
His lord himself forgot.’

R. C. TRENCH

(1807-86)

THOMAS THE RHYMER

TRUE Thomas lay on Huntlie bank;
A ferlie¹ he spied wi' his e'e;
And there he saw a ladye bright
Come riding down by the Eildon Tree.

Her skirt was o' the grass-green silk;
Her mantle o' the velvet fyne;
At ilka tett² o' her horse's mane
Hung fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas he pu'd aff his cap,
And louted low down on his knee:
'Hail to thee, Mary, Queen of Heaven!
For thy peer on earth could never be.'

'O no, O no, Thomas,' she said,
'That name does not belang to me;
I'm but the Queen o' fair Elfland,
That am hither come to visit thee.

'Harp and carp, Thomas,' she said;
'Harp and carp³ along wi' me;
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be.'

¹ marvel.

² tuft.

³ play and recite (as a minstrel).

THOMAS THE RHYMER

'Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird¹ shall never daunten me.'
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.

'Now ye maun go wi' me,' she said;
'True Thomas, ye maun go wi' me;
And ye maun serve me seven years,
Through weal or woe as may chance to be.'

She's mounted on her milk-white steed,
She's ta'en true Thomas up behind;
And aye, whene'er her bridle rang,
The steed gaed swifter than the wind.

O they rade on, and farther on;
The steed gaed swifter than the wind;
Until they reached a desert wide,
And living land was left behind.

'Light down, light down now, true Thomas,
And lean your head upon my knee;
Abide ye there a little space,
And I will show you ferlies three.

'O see ye not yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi' thorns and briers?
That is the Path of Righteousness,
Though after it but few inquire.

'And see ye not yon braid, braid road,
That lies across the lily leven?²
That is the Path of Wickedness,
Though some call it the Road to Heaven.

¹ doom.

² lawn.

ANONYMOUS

‘And see ye not yon bonny road
That winds about the fernie brae?
That is the Road to fair Elfland,
Where thou and I this night maun gae.
‘But, Thomas, ye shall haud your tongue,
Whatever ye may hear or see;
For speak ye word in Elflyn-land,
Ye’ll ne’er win back to your ain countrie.’
O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded rivers abune the knee;
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.
It was mirk, mirk night; there was nae starlight;
They waded thro’ red blude to the knee;
For a’ the blude that’s shed on the earth
Rins through the springs o’ that countrie.
Syne they came to a garden green,
And she pu’d an apple frae a tree:
‘Take this for thy wages, true Thomas;
It will give thee tongue that can never lee.’
‘My tongue is my ain,’ true Thomas he said;
‘A gudely gift ye wad gie to me!
I neither dought¹ to buy or sell
At fair or tryst where I might be.
‘I dought neither speak to prince or peer,
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye.’
‘Now haud thy peace, Thomas,’ she said;
‘For as I say, so must it be.’

¹ could.

THOMAS THE RHYMER

He has gotten a coat of the even¹ cloth,
And a pair o' shoon of the velvet green;
And till seven years were gane and past
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

ANONYMOUS

¹ smooth.

THE BLIND BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER

IT was a blind beggar, had long lost his sight;
He had a fair daughter of beauty most bright;
And many a gallant brave suitor had she,
For none was so comely as pretty Bessee.

And though she was of favour most fair,
Yet seeing she was but a poor beggar's heir,
Of ancient housekeepers despised was she,
Whose sons came as suitors to pretty Bessee.

Wherefore in great sorrow fair Bessy did say,
'Good father, and mother, let me go away
To seek out my fortune, whatever it be.'
This suit then they granted to pretty Bessee.

Then Bessy, that was of beauty so bright,
All clad in grey russet, and late in the night,
From father and mother alone parted she:
Who sighèd and sobbèd for pretty Bessee.

She went till she came to Stratford-le-Bow;
Then knew she not whither, nor which way to go:
With tears she lamented her hard destinie,
So sad and so heavy was pretty Bessee.

She kept on her journey until it was day,
And went unto Rumford along the high way;
Where at the Queen's Arms entertainèd was she:
So fair and well-favoured was pretty Bessee.



THE BLIND BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER OF BEDNALL GREEN

ANONYMOUS

She had not been there a month to an end
But master and mistress and all was her friend:
And every brave gallant, that once did her see,
Was straightway enamoured of pretty Bessee.

Great gifts they did send her of silver and gold,
And in their songs daily her love was extolled;
Her beauty was blazèd in every degree;
So fair and so comely was pretty Bessee.

The young men of Rumford in her had their joy;
She showed herself courteous and modestly coy;
And at her commandment still would they be;
So fair and so comely was pretty Bessee.

Four suitors at once unto her did go;
They cravèd her favour, but still she said no;
'I would not wish gentles to marry with me';
Yet ever they honoured pretty Bessee.

The first of them was a gallant young knight,
And he came unto her disguised in the night;
The second a gentleman of good degree,
Who wooèd and suèd for pretty Bessee.

A merchant of London, whose wealth was not small,
He was the third suitor, and proper withal;
Her master's own son the fourth man must be,
Who swore he would die for pretty Bessee.

THE BLIND BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER

And, 'If thou wilt marry with me,' quoth the knight,
'I'll make thee a lady with joy and delight;
My heart's so enthralled by thy beautie,
That soon I shall die for pretty Bessee.'

The gentleman said, 'Come, marry with me.
As fine as a lady my Bessy shall be.
My life is distressed. O hear me!' quoth he;
'And grant me thy love, my pretty Bessee.'

'Let me be thy husband,' the merchant did say;
'Thou shalt live in London both gallant and gay;
My ships shall bring home rich jewels for thee,
And I will for ever love pretty Bessee.'

Then Bessy she sighed, and thus she did say,
'My father and mother I mean to obey;
First get their good will, and be faithful to me
And then you shall marry your pretty Bessee.'

To every one this answer she made,
Wherefore unto her they joyfully said,
'This thing to fulfil we all do agree;
But where dwells thy father, my pretty Bessee?'

'My father,' she said, 'is soon to be seen:
The silly blind beggar of Bednall Green,
That daily sits begging for charitie—
He is the good father of pretty Bessee.'

ANONYMOUS

'His marks and his tokens are known very well;
He always is led with a dog and a bell:
A silly old man, God knoweth, is he,
Yet he is the father of pretty Bessee.'

'Nay then,' quoth the merchant, 'thou art not for me.'
'Nor,' quoth the innholder, 'my wife thou shalt be.'
'I loathe,' said the gentle, 'a beggar's degree,
And therefore adieu, my pretty Bessee.'

'Why then,' quoth the knight, 'hap better or worse,
I weigh not true love by the weight of the purse,
And beauty is beauty in every degree;
Then welcome unto me, my pretty Bessee.

'With thee to thy father forthwith I will go.'
'Nay soft,' quoth his kinsmen, 'it must not be so;
A poor beggar's daughter no lady shall be;
Then take thy adieu of pretty Bessee.'

But soon after this by break of the day
The knight had from Rumford stole Bessy away.
The young men of Rumford, as thick as might be,
Rode after to fetch again pretty Bessee.

As swift as the wind to ride they were seen,
Until they came near unto Bednall Green;
And as the knight lighted most courteously,
They all fought against him for pretty Bessee.

THE BLIND BEGGAR'S DAUGHTER

But rescue came speedily over the plain,
Or else the young knight for his love had been slain.
This fray being ended, then straightway he see
His kinsmen come railing at pretty Bessee.

Then spake the blind beggar, 'Although I be poor,
Yet rail not against my child at my own door.
Though she be not deckèd in velvet and pearl,
Yet will I drop angels with you for my girl.

'And then, if my gold may better her birth,
And equal the gold that you lay on the earth,
Then neither rail nor grudge you to see
The blind beggar's daughter a lady to be.

'But first you shall promise, and have it well known,
The gold that you drop shall all be your own.'
With that they replied, 'Contented be we.'
'Then here's,' quoth the beggar, 'for pretty Bessee.'

With that an angel he cast on the ground,
And droppèd in angels full three thousand pound;
And oftentimes it was provèd most plain,
For the gentlemen's one the beggar dropped twain;

So that the place, wherein they did sit,
With gold it was coverèd every whit.
The gentlemen then, having dropped all their store,
Said, 'Now, beggar, hold, for we have no more.'

ANONYMOUS

'Thou hast fulfilled thy promise aright.
Then marry,' quoth he, 'my girl to this knight;
And here,' added he, 'I will now throw you down
A hundred pounds more to buy her a gown.'

The gentlemen all, that this treasure had seen,
Admirèd the beggar of Bednall Green;
And all those, that were her suitors before,
Their flesh for very anger they tore.

Thus was fair Bessy matched to the knight,
And then made a lady in others' despite:
A fairer lady there never was seen,
Than the blind beggar's daughter of Bednall Green.

ANONYMOUS

ROBIN HOOD'S DEATH AND BURIAL

WHEN Robin Hood and Little John,
 Down a down, a down, a down,
Went o'er yon bank of broom,
Said Robin Hood to Little John,
 'We have shot for many a pound:
 Hey down, a down, a down.

'But I am not able to shoot one shot more,
 My arrows will not flee;
But I have a cousin lives down below,
 Please God, she will bleed me.'

Now Robin is to fair Kirkley gone,
 As fast as he can wen;¹
But before he came there, as we do hear,
 He was taken very ill.

And when that he came to fair Kirkley-hall,
 He knocked all at the ring,²
But none was so ready as his cousin herself
 For to let bold Robin in.

'Will you please to sit down, cousin Robin,' she said,
 'And drink some beer with me?'
'No, I will neither eat nor drink,
 Till I am blooded by thee.'

¹ win, go.

² door-knocker.

ANONYMOUS

'Well, I have a room, cousin Robin,' she said,
 'Which you did never see,
And if you please to walk therein,
 You blooded by me shall be.'

She took him by the lily-white hand,
 And led him to a private room,
And there she blooded bold Robin Hood,
 Whilst one drop of blood would run.

She blooded him in the vein of the arm,
 And locked him up in the room,
There did he bleed all the live-long day,
 Until the next day at noon.

He then bethought him of a casement door,
 Thinking for to be gone,
He was so weak he could not leap,
 Nor he could not get down.

He then bethought him of his bugle-horn,
 Which hung low down to his knee,
He set his horn unto his mouth,
 And blew out weak blasts three.

Then Little John, when hearing him,
 As he sat under the tree,
'I fear my master is near dead,
 He blows so wearily.'

ROBIN HOOD'S DEATH AND BURIAL

Then Little John to fair Kirkley is gone,
As fast as he can dree;¹

But when he came to Kirkley-hall,
He broke locks two or three:

Until he came bold Robin to,
Then he fell on his knee;
'A boon, a boon,' cries Little John,
'Master, I beg of thee.'

'What is that boon,' quoth Robin Hood,
'Little John, thou begs of me?'
'It is to burn fair Kirkley-hall,
And all their nunnery.'

'Now nay, now nay,' quoth Robin Hood,
'That boon I'll not grant thee;
I never hurt woman in all my life,
Nor man in woman's company.

'I never hurt fair maid in all my time,
Nor at my end shall it be;
But give me my bent bow in my hand,
And a broad arrow I'll let flee;
And where this arrow is taken up,
There shall my grave digged be.

'Lay me a green sod under my head,
And another at my feet;
And lay my bent bow by my side,
Which was my music sweet;
And make my grave of gravel and green,
Which is most right and meet.

¹ endure, bear.

ANONYMOUS

'Let me have length and breadth enough,
With a green sod under my head;
That they may say, when I am dead,
Here lies bold Robin Hood.'

These words they readily promised him,
Which did bold Robin please:
And there they buried bold Robin Hood,
Near to the fair Kirkclèys.

ANONYMOUS

